

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN
GRAY 205

to be floating down the green waterways of the
pink city, seated in a black and gondola with silver pearl
and curtains. The mere lines looked to him like trailing
those straight lines of turquoise-blue that follow one as one
pushes out to the Lido. The sudden flashes of colour reminded him
of the opal-and-iris-throated birds that gleam
round the tall honeycombed Campanile, or stalk, with such
stately grace, through the dim, dust-stained arcades. Leaning
back with half-closed eyes, he kept saying over and over to
himself:

Devant une facade rose,
Sur le marbre d'ua escalier.

The whole of Venice was in those two lines. He
remembered the autumn that he had passed there, and a
wonderful love that had stirred him to mad, delightful follies.
There was romance in every place. But Venice, like
Oxford, had kept the background for romance, and, to the true
romantic, background was everything, or almost everything.
Basil had been with him part of the time, and had gone wild
over Tintoret. Poor Basil! what a horrible way for a man to
die!
He sighed, and took up the volume again, and
tried to forget. He read of the swallows that fly in and out of
the little cafe at Smyrna where the Hadjis sit counting their
amber beads and the turbaned merchants smoke their long
tasselled pipes and talk gravely to each other; he read of the Obelisk
in the Place de la Concorde that weeps tears of granite in its
lonely sunless exile, and longs to be back by the hot lotus-
covered Nile, where there are Sphinxes, and rose-red ibises, and
white vultures with gilded claws, and crocodiles, with small beryl
eyes, that crawl over the green steaming mud; he began to
brood over those verses which, drawing music from kiss-stained
marble, tell of that curious statue that Gautier compares to a
contralto voice, the *monstre charmant* that couches in the
porphyry-room of the Louvre. But after a time the book fell from his
hand. He grew nervous, and a horrible fit of terror came
over him. What if Alan Campbell should be out of England?
Days would elapse before he could come back. Perhaps he
might refuse to come. What could he do then? Every moment was
of vital importance. They had been great friends once,
five years before—almost inseparable, indeed. Then the
intimacy had come suddenly to an end. When they met in
society now, it was only Dorian Gray who smiled; Alan Campbell
never did. He was an extremely clever young man, though

he had no